

Service was developed with assistance from pr pros regarding their most frequently required info needs & level of computer proficiency. Nexis says new service is "indicative of an emerging philosophy that information & the method for accessing it is most effective when tailored to the individual who will be using it. This is not a one-size-fits-all world."

In use now on a trial-test basis at several firms across the country. General availability expected this summer. (Info: P.O. Box 933, Dayton, Ohio 45401-0933; 1-800-227-9597)

HEALTH COSTS, BIGGEST EMPLOYEE ISSUE, CUT BY MANAGED CARE

Survey of 2,097 employers nationwide by Foster Higgins found the total health benefit cost averaged \$3,741/employee in '94, **down** 1.1% from '93.

Last year also saw the biggest increase in employee enrollment in managed care plans (preferred provider org'ns, health maintenance org'ns & point-of-service plans) in survey's 9 year history -- from 52% of all covered employees in '93 to 63% in '94. Other findings:

- Large employers (500+ employees) reported an average 1.9% decrease in benefit costs. But smaller employers experienced a 6.5% increase.
- Nearly a third of all large employers reported making significant changes to their health benefit program in '94, such as adding a managed care plan or changing health plan vendors.
- The growth in managed care was in *point-of-service plans*. They include strong incentives to use a network of healthcare providers but provide some coverage if a participant chooses a doctor outside the network.
- Many employers "carved out" certain high-cost benefits such as prescription drugs & mental health from their medical plans & offered them thru special managed care programs. Among very large employers (20,000+ employees): those offering prescription drug card plans rose from 36% to 66%; offering a separate PPO for mental health rose from 23% to 44%.
- For the first time, employers induced a significant number of retirees to join HMOs, particularly in the West. Getting this high-cost population into low-cost plans will have a big impact on employers' healthcare liability over the long term," explains Dave Rahill, a principal at Foster Higgins.
- Northeast saw biggest shift in enrollment to managed care, from 34% in '93 to 63% in '94, with a 9.7% decline in total benefit cost. Midwest grew from 51% to 60%. West, where it's already high, went from 72% to 80%. South saw little growth (57% to 58%) & costs rose 3.9%.

"Employers clearly did not sit back during the health reform debate & wait for the gov't to solve their cost problems. They seized the initiative to hold down cost thru use of managed care plans & other cost-management techniques."

PR HAS CRUCIAL ROLE IN STOPPING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence is growing. Take a look at the work environment: increasing job stress; use of alcohol & drugs; destabilizing downsizing; availability of firearms. "These are primary contributors," Tom Preston, The Preston Group (Lexington, Ky), told pr.

SOME STATS

- A minimum of 1/2 million to as many as 2 million incidents of workplace violence occur annually, according to his research. More effort is being made to report & record it: law enforcement agencies are classifying it as a separate type of incident; there are a few clearinghouses tracking it; insurance companies are doing studies, trying to quantify it. "Probably before the end of this decade, insurance companies are going to require workplace violence contingency plans or you won't get insurance."
- Serious workplace violence incidents (involving injury, death, sustained absences) cost an organization between \$225-250,000 per case.
- It's the 3rd leading cause of all workplace fatalities. Among women, it's the leading cause of workplace death. In '92, 43% of all women who died on the job were victims of workplace violence, compared to 18% of men.
- 20% of all incidents involving physical injury are traced to some type of romantic entanglement.
- Fewer than 20% of all companies are believed to have a contingency plan.

WHY PR INVOLVEMENT?

- Publics (internal & external) are affected.
- An organization's reputation is at stake.
- Media are attracted, generating multiple stories.
- PR's role is to lead in issue management, anticipating matters that can affect clients/organizations, & to prevent or respond to problems.
- PR is a behavioral science discipline. Workplace violence deals with a number of different, marked behaviors.
- "Potential loss of key executives has astounding pr implications. Quite often, key executives are prime targets. When leadership is impacted, an organization is severely handicapped."
- Litigation always should be anticipated, even if the org'n is a victim. PR has to deal with the communications & the consequences of litigation.
- "We're responsible more today than ever to assist in improving the bottomline. Workplace violence is extremely expensive. Our effectiveness or ineffectiveness has an effect on company profits."



WHAT CAN PR DO?

"There's a management philosophy that it just doesn't happen to us. Today, in our society, it does. And when it happens, the consequences are enormously damaging from actual harm, to litigation, to destruction of reputation." Guidelines:

1. There has to be **consciousness** within the organization that it can happen. That consciousness has to start at the top & permeate management.
2. Then ask, what are our **vulnerabilities**? Can we institute measures to at least reduce the possibility of it?
3. Are supervisors, managers, people in responsible positions **cognizant of erratic behaviors** within the organization? If so, are there steps for them to take to investigate the reasons behind the behaviors?
4. Is there an **open policy of 2-way communication** in the organization where employees who may have problems or fears or are acting abnormally can seek out help? Or can be directed to counseling or help?
5. How does an organization **screen applicants** for a position? Do we have to go far beyond normal screening & institute psychological tests to see if someone is predisposed to violence?
6. Organizations need to have **zero-based tolerance** for workplace violence. In airports, that means you don't even make jokes about bombs or sky-jacking. If you do, you'll be detained, questioned, perhaps even prosecuted because airports have zero-based tolerance. "It becomes an issue in organizational planning, in establishment of organizational policies, & pr should be involved.
7. **Monitor attitudes** & the atmosphere. Provide training so supervisors understand what to look for. The Postal Service now has workplace violence teams who travel thruout the US to develop measures to not only prevent but spot potential violence before it occurs.

"More & more companies are going to have to do this. I believe insurance companies are going to demand contingency plans before they give liability insurance or workers comp. PR must help in the prevention side."

PR ASPECT GAINING RECOGNITION

"Growth of terrorism both internationally & in the US in the last 10 years has caused a number of corporate executives to revisit the issue **from a pr standpoint** -- rather than just from a security standpoint.

- Going beyond security reduces the threat of litigation. The courts will say, 'Did you do everything humanly possible to prepare for this?' & you say 'We had a security plan.' That isn't good enough anymore because sophisticated terrorists can penetrate any security," Preston told pr.

He speaks from his experience doing counter-terrorism work. He believes his firm is the only one in the US involved in this work.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER AWARDS PROVIDE GUIDE TO PROGRAMMING

Organizations committed to employee volunteerism are sought for 3rd annual Awards for Excellence in Corporate Community Service from Points of Light Foundation. **Eligibility rules show where such programs are heading:**

1. Must address a *serious community need* (not sr. mgmt's pet projects)...
2. thru a *company-wide & company-supported* employee volunteer program...
3. which demonstrates the extent to which a company has *internalized the values of corporate employee volunteerism into its culture.*

PLF's Principles of Excellence are judges' criteria:

- **Acknowledge** that the organization's involvement & the employee volunteers' efforts contribute to the achievement of its business goals.
- **Commit** to an employee volunteer program that encourages the involvement of every employee, & *treat it like any other business function.*
- **Target** efforts at serious social problems in the community.

Businesses may nominate themselves, the org's they support may nominate them, or anyone who knows of a contender may nominate. Deadline is April 21.

Last year's winners were: Honeywell (Mpls); General Mills (Mpls); Dayton Hudson (Mpls); Tucson Electric Power Company; Tosco Refining (Concord, Calif); Spears, Moore, Rebman & Williams (Chattanooga). (For a nomination form or more info: Points of Light Foundation, 1737 H Street, NW, Wash DC 20006; 202/223-9186)

ONLINE INFO RETRIEVAL SERVICE EXCLUSIVELY FOR PR

ClientSmart "is designed for hands-on use by the people who want & need current & actionable information to serve their clients...in a manner that makes sense to communicators, not professional researchers or computer technicians," explains Craig Jolley, dir. It's built around a Windows-based interface customized for the pr industry & accesses the full range of Lexis-Nexis data sources -- newspapers, mags, wire svcs, SEC filings, biz listings, analyst reports, industry trend reports.

4 COMPONENTS

- 1) **Client Track** -- automatically pulls from the Nexis database any new info on selected clients;
- 2) **Issues Track** -- accesses info on the newest developments involving key issues which affect a client's business or industry;
- 3) **Media Watch** -- accesses previous articles written by reporters & editors who are covering a client;
- 4) **Client Builder** -- helps identify potential clients, then accesses up to 48 categories of info on each company selected.